

TEMPLON



Press release

12 December 2022

FRANÇOIS ROUAN

Odaliques et Pavanes 2009-2019

23 March – 13 May 2023



Saxifrage n°IV, 2022, oil on braided canvas, 78 x 66 in.

At the age of 80, painter François Rouan is returning to Galerie Templon almost two decades after his last show with a brand new exhibition of recent work.

At the start of his career in the 1960s François Rouan was linked with the Supports/Surfaces movement without officially associating himself with it. Since then he has trodden a unique path, deconstructing the traditional structure of the picture to open up new avenues in contemporary painting.

Complex and erudite, his new paintings stay true to thirty years of experimentation and artistic engagement, a “political utopia with a humanist dimension.” His ambiguous figures and iconographic references are ornamented with motifs evoking the abstract fragments that

characterise the artist's core method: braiding. Alternating between relishing the joys of form and colour and posing metaphysical questions, his work resonates particularly strongly with current concerns: our relationship with images, the reverse side of the surface, the capacity painting possesses to reconstruct a fragmental real and mental world.

Born in Montpellier, France, in 1943, François Rouan moved to Paris in 1961 to study at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts. His research into collages led to his first experiments with braiding in 1965, initially with gouache-covered paper than painted canvases, cut up then reassembled as a grid. His focus shifted to other techniques, including hatching and wax. He let himself be guided by a diverse array of materials which he combined in his imposing compositions, transforming them into what appear to be homages, thus incorporating the history of art into his work. The powerfully tangible presence of the surface in his art, the fragmentation of light and the coloured rhythms came together to contribute to the emergence of a new space, a picture, an original and instantly recognisable mode of painting.

In 1980 he broadened his practice to encompass other mediums, both photographic and film-based. His images began to play with inversion and opposition between photography and painting, the abstract and the figurative, the true and the false, marking the first appearance of his "braiding of negatives".

The 1990s were devoted to new conversations around the image of the body in particular - female, male, attacked or magnified. His "shells" revealed a palette of new, raw colours – red, magenta and pink – and an unsettling interplay of apparitions and forms. His work in the decade from 2000 to 2010 embraced the same approach and procedures, with a reappearance of the figure.

He was an artist-in-residence at the Villa Medici from 1971 to 1973 and received the distinction of Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres in 1985.

On the occasion of his exhibition, a 72-page catalogue will be published in march 2023.

His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions and retrospectives, notably at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1975, 1983 and 1994), Musée d'Art Moderne in Villeneuve-d'Ascq (1995), Abattoirs in Toulouse (2006) and Musée Fabre in Montpellier (2017). He has been exhibited worldwide, including by the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York (1972), Stadtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf (1979), Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo (1997) and Beijing Institute of Fine Arts (2000). Between 1987 and 2005, François Rouan's work featured in a dozen exhibitions at Galerie Templon.

In September 2024, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon is holding a major retrospective of his work.